

Agents Say Kovalchuk Deal Will Stand

Written by Matthew Collier
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[ProHockey Talk](#) 's Joe Yerdon wrote Friday that many agents believe if the NHLPA appeals the overturning of the Devils' 17-year, \$102 million, they will win hands down and the contract will be allowed.

Yerdon pulls this quote from [The National Post](#) :

But several player agents said if the matter goes before an arbitrator, the league would soon find out that it "doesn't have much of a leg to stand on."

"I can tell you that during bargaining, that the league was not successful in negotiating rules to limit the length of contract a player can sign with a club," said player agent Ian Pulver, who was one of the authors of the CBA. "So the NHL is going to have to show evidence that the club and the player were trying to defeat rules in the collective agreement, because they can't certainly prove that a player will not play when he's 44 years old."

"You have to have the evidence to support that. Saying 'we think' is not strong enough."

Indeed, there is nothing in the language of the CBA that limits the number of years on a player contract. Neither is there any proof that Kovalchuk will not be playing in 2026-27.

The Devils have until Monday to renegotiate or allow the NHLPA to file a grievance. Expect the latter. And, though I criticized Bettman for letting some get away with front-loaded long-term deals and not Kovalchuk, the league is not wrong for attempting to shut the "cheating" down. But, instead of "investigating" the Hossa deal, they should have rejected it immediately. Same with Pronger, same with Zetterberg. But, since no action was taken then, Bettman and the NHL will likely not be able to take Kovy's deal away.

Earlier this week, I wrote that Bettman's image would be further damaged by the Kovalchuk rejection. What I should have said is that everyone comes away looking bad. Owners look like they're trying to cheat, Bettman looks like he plays by different rules depending on the situation

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and the players look greedy as heck. Yerdon puts it best saying that trying to get billionaires to admit they were wrong is getting "blood from a stone."

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